

# Caregiver Connection

July 2013

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.  
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION

## Graduating to a new life

June is the month that provides visible proof that the past lives of young people do not have to define their future.

They march across stages to receive an important piece of paper that marks a milestone of academic achievement and gives them a passport to the future.

The milestone – graduation – is particularly important for young people whose life journeys have been marked by upheaval and chaos, sometimes abuse and neglect, and who have found the strength to get up every day, put one foot in front of the other and survive.

Their resilience is inspiring.



Janice Cole



Liz Mickelson



Bree Yager



Janice Cole

When Janice Cole earned her college degree this June in sociology with an emphasis in criminology, she joined a small group of people – the 2 percent who have been in foster care and graduate from college.

Now that she has her degree from the University of Washington, Cole, 23, wants to do something important with it.

"I want to contribute by working with disadvantaged youth," said Cole, who works with the College Success Foundation's Passport to College Program, which helps kids get to college. "I want to feel I can make a difference for kids like me.

She wants to be able to connect young people with resources so they don't feel the frustration of "having goals and not being able to meet them."

Janice was placed into foster care at a young age and adopted when she was 5. That changed at age 14, when she came to live with her older, adopted sister in kinship care.

"She always urged me on to be the best I could," Janice said.

Despite the turmoil and uncertainty in her life, her eyes have remained focused on the prize of making the most of her life.

"I've always been a go-getter kind of person," she said.

She was helped along the way by a couple of "fantastic teachers" at Columbia River High School in Vancouver, she said. She was enrolled in a special program that was "very academic, very college-focused." Like Bree, she was on the varsity swim team.

But despite her strong will to succeed, she thought college was not a possibility – not because of her grades, but because of money. Then one day, a misdirected piece of mail about the Passport to College Program arrived at her house.

"That completely changed the trajectory of my life," she said. "It was a very, very, happy mistake." In that moment, she realized financial resources were available to help her and kids like her to attend college.

She has taken advantage of them. She started as a psychology major at UW, found it was not for her, spent a year in community college, then returned to the UW.

She is now applying for jobs, although she is not sure exactly what she wants to do. She has been married for 18 months to her husband, Timothy Chambers, and continues to work at the College Success Foundation to help determine how to better support those in college who have traveled a similar road.

Like Bree, her message to others is one of resilience.

"Never give up," she said. "I understand that there is such a distrust of the system and a distrust of adults. It's hard to ask for help. Even though it feels like they are alone, there are always people who can help them meet the goals they set in life."



**Liz  
Mickelson**

Sitting around a campfire at Camp To Belong Washington, counselors hold their thumb and finger two to three inches apart and tell campers separated from their brothers and sisters by out-of-home care: "This is your life story so far, and somebody else has written it."

Then they hold their hands two feet apart and say, "This is the rest of your life story, and you get to write most of it."

Liz Mickelson has been an integral part of the camp family since she and her sister Cheyenne came as campers four years ago. Liz, 19, has become a counselor. She also just graduated from North Thurston High School in Lacey. She has taken the lessons of camp to heart, and the positive energy in her voice is obvious as she talks about her life ahead, which will include college.

"I'm really excited to get started with something new – a new experience that's different from the schools where I have been," she said.

In her younger years, Liz lived with her aunt and uncle, Shelly and Tony Willis, off and on, Shelly says. Liz' parents were unable to care for her or her sister, so Shelley and Tony have been her caretaker for the past six or seven years.

"I love Liz," said Shelly, who also is executive director of Family Education and Support Services, an organization that supports relatives caring for children in Thurston, Lewis and Mason counties. "I knew she had the ability to be doing so much more, and that wasn't going to happen with the family where she was living."

In addition to her high school courses, Liz also has been learning sign language and has helped start a reading club at high school.

Liz likes working with younger kids. She plans to work toward a career in early childhood education and development. She will attend South Puget Sound Community College.

"For as long as I can remember, I always wanted to do something with little kids," Liz said. "They are fun."

She gets some of that experience at camp, but she also gets to work around counselors who show by example how to help young people.

"Camp is her rock," Shelly said. She has become close to some counselors and to camp-co-director Deb Kennedy.

"It is great she has strong, healthy mentors in her life," Shelly said.

"Liz doesn't just get the cause. She is the cause," Deb said. "She so connected with the kids because she is one of them."

Deb sees a bright future for her.

"She just always has a positive attitude."



**Bree  
Yager**

"My mom told me 'you will never graduate high school,'" said Bree Yager, 17. She became the first of her six siblings to graduate from high school on June 12, when she received her diploma from Clover Park High School.

Her life journey was rocky. She was taken from her mom as an infant and lived in foster care until age 5. Over the next several years, she went home to mom and was removed again, living in short-term situations. She finally came to live in the home of her oldest brother and sister-in-law, Timothy and Leanna Gaitlin, who became her guardians. As with all kids who need adult champions, they were important to her success. She also described Children's Administration Social Worker Gina Patrick as a strong positive support.

"It was hard," she said of her growing-up years. "I left home with a backpack of things and that's all I had," she said of the last time she left her mother. She said she begged for food and stole to have clothes.

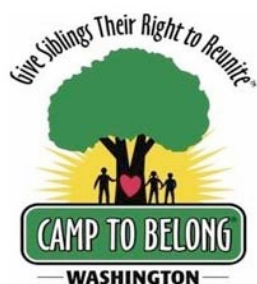
Once she came to live in a stable home situation, she started to thrive. She went to a science and math program for two years, but that didn't fit with what she wanted to do. She transferred to the high school and joined the swim team. The child who could have drowned in a sea of her own despair was named captain of that team her senior year.

She and one of her brothers attended Camp To Belong Washington, where counselors – many former youth in care – empower campers to live their goals and dreams. The Tacoma News Tribune featured her story as she prepared to graduate.

She also received one of the Governor's Scholarships for kids who have been in foster care. The scholarship made a huge difference in being able to apply for college. This fall, she will attend Washington State University, aiming toward a career in neo-natal medicine.

"My mom said she never bonded with me as a child," Bree said. "I love being around babies, the whole nurture thing. I want to make sure bonds will be created for another mom and child."

If she has a message for those in similar situations, it is this: "It's been hard, but it's been worth it. Don't give up. Keep your head up and keep on going."



## Camp to Belong volunteers needed

Counselors and other volunteers are being sought for August's Camp To Belong Washington, a five-day residential camp that brings together siblings separated by out of home care.

The 2013 camp will be Aug. 12-17 at Miracle Ranch in Port Orchard. Volunteers must be 18 years of age to be a counselor. If you would like more information, please contact Deb Kennedy, camp director, at [deb@fosterfamilyconnections.org](mailto:deb@fosterfamilyconnections.org) or 360-535-1190.



# Child Information Placement Referral Form

## Have you received one lately?

A few weeks ago while reviewing a Facebook group page, we noticed several foster parents excitedly commenting about receiving the Child Information / Placement Referral form.

This will become a regular occurrence as Children's social workers are working really hard to ensure "caregivers receive appropriate and timely information about the needs of children placed with them", as required in the Revised Braam Settlement Agreement.

The Child Information/Placement Referral form is provided to the caregiver either in person, or as an email attachment. Foster parents sign a copy of the form, if received in person and the social worker uploads it into FamLink, or up-loads the email showing the information was sent to the caregiver within the required timeframes. Timeframes for caregivers to receive the form are:

- Within 72 hours of an initial placement.
- At or before a planned change in placement.
- Within 24 hours of an urgent placement change.

If you've recently received a copy of the Child Information/Placement Referral form, say thank you to the social worker. They are being diligent in making sure you have as much information, as soon as possible, about the child placed in your care.

"My family lived in a huge house. Five bedrooms in a nice neighborhood. Sounds great right? It wasn't. The electric and water were always turned off. My mom was a drug addict and never home. That meant I had to take care of my sick grandmother while being the mom to my brother and sister. We didn't always have food. I was only ten.

Living with my grandparents now is amazing. It was probably the best thing that could have happened to me. My grandparents try to give us three children the world. Grampa may be grumpy a lot, but I know that I'm still loved.

Gramma teaches me new things all the time. Especially what's ladylike and what's not. Many other lessons as well. They show me many things every day, from easier ways to do chores to how to dress properly.

One thing Gramma did for me, that meant the most, was showing me I'm loved and she cares about me, and I won't grow up to be my mom. I've never felt that before. They showed me I'm special. They may be crazy, looney, strict, grumpy, loving, different, wild, but they're unique, and I'm glad their mine."

— Beverly, age 14

## Voices of children

Winners have been selected for the 11th annual Voices of Children Contest for kids being raised by grandparents and other relatives. The contest is coordinated by Family Education and Support Services, an organization that provides support to relative caregivers in Thurston, Mason and Lewis counties.

Children and youth submit entries in writing or with a work of art that describes how their lives have been positively affected by their relative caregivers.

This year's winners will be honored at a ceremony with Washington Lt. Gov. Brad Owen at 1 p.m. July 11 in his office at the Legislative Building on Capitol Campus.

Here are some of the winning entries. Watch the Caregiver Connection next month for the other winners!

She helped me feel safe,  
she made me feel loved,  
she gave me hope,  
she helped me forget,  
she helped me be happy,  
she gave me music,  
she gave me God,  
she helped me learn,  
most importantly,  
she helped me live.

— Ashanti, age 11



## Summer safety tips



### Keep safe from sun rays this summer!

It is important to use sunscreen and avoid the full sun from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., if possible.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration allows companies to place star ratings on sunscreen products to help consumers more easily determine the level of protection. Four stars signify the highest non-prescription protection.

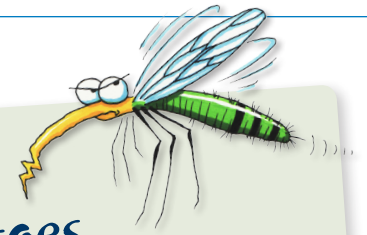
Sunscreens also carry a rating, which is abbreviated on packages as "SPF" – "Sun Protection Factor." The ratings are based on the theoretical amount of time you can stay in the sun without getting a sunburn if your skin is unprotected. They run from a low SPF 2 to as high as 80, the greatest protection.

Dr. Don Ashley advises buying a sunscreen with at least a SPF 15 rating that is effective at protecting against both damaging UV-A (ultra-violet A) and burning UV-B (ultra-violet B) rays.

To be its most effective, sunscreen needs to be applied long enough before exposure to enable it to bond to the skin. Swimming, moving, sweating or just getting sun exposure breaks down the sunscreen, so more needs to be applied every couple of hours.

If your doctor approves it for babies younger than six months, sunscreen can be applied to small areas. An example of a small area is the face, nose and ears, but not near the eyes. For babies who do not put the back of their hands into their mouth, sunscreen also can be applied to the back of hands.

For babies less than six months, use most of the same protections as used by older people: protective clothing, getting in the shade and avoiding bounce-back light from water, sand and concrete. Be especially careful on overcast days, when some light is still getting through the clouds.



### Keep safe from Mosquitoes

Mosquitoes can be especially troublesome at dawn and dusk. They often swarm during night-time sports. Although the specific virus a mosquito might carry may change from year to year, mosquitoes do not change their biting habits.

People living within a few miles of farming or irrigation need to be especially careful of mosquitoes from the time the sun is setting until it's fully up the next day, since nearby sprinklers and irrigation seem to stir them up. A good rule of thumb is to use insect repellant on uncovered skin from dusk to dawn from Easter to Halloween.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency advises consumers to carefully read the label of insect repellants to determine how long they last and for what ages it is considered safe. In the correct concentration at the correct age, you can use products such as DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or specially processed oil of lemon eucalyptus. Read the label carefully for application and duration.

DEET has no age restrictions, other than no repellent is considered safe below the age of two months. DEET concentrations of more than 50 percent do not give any better protection and are harder to apply.

It is best to avoid oil of lemon eucalyptus with children younger than three. Oil of lemon eucalyptus also does not last as long as certain chemicals.

Because little children often put things in their mouth, insect repellent should not be spread on their hands. They also should not be allowed to spread repellent with their own hands. Instead, a grown-up should apply the repellent to the child. Be careful not get any into the child's mouth or eyes.

Information provided by Dr. Don Ashley, Children's Administration Regional Medical Consultant

## Help for caregivers when children in care are missing

In collaboration with community partners, Children's Administration has developed a Missing From Care Informational Toolkit. The documents in the toolkit provide caregivers and staff members with important information to help identify a youth at risk of running, as well as interventions to prevent running from occurring. These documents are posted at:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/healthsafety.asp>

## Support for foster-parent relatives

A support network has been built for foster parents and caregivers. The network is collaboration between Children's Administration and the Olive Crest/Fostering Together organization, which has a recruitment-retention contract with the state.

You can find the updated list of people who support caregivers at the end of this Caregiver Connection. The list will be updated monthly as needed.

Fostering Together provides help and support for potential foster parents, and information and referral services to foster parents and caregivers. The regional liaisons also help resolve issues foster parents may experience. Contact the staff member listed for your area with any questions you might have.

# Permanency Pacts:

## Helping youth transition to adulthood

So you know a youth who's 18 and leaving foster care. Perhaps he or she is graduating and going on to college or looking for a job. Maybe future plans are uncertain.

Turning 18 is a time of transition. For those who have grown up with their biological families, adult support systems usually are in place. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and adult friends of the family pitch in to help in many different ways.

But for those who do not have supportive adults, the transition can be a time of uncertainty and fear that they are completely on their own.

That's where a new plan from FosterClub, a national network for youth in care, can help.

FosterClub has put together a "permanency pact." The pact is an agreement – a written pledge – between the youth and a supportive adult who provides specific assistance to a young person in foster care with a goal of establishing a lifelong, kin-like relationship.

The pact can be as simple as supplying some temporary storage space or more crucial support, such as helping with a job hunt or completing complex government forms. It can be an occasional assist such as help with moving or an ongoing commitment to make the foster youth a part of a social circle or family gatherings. The extent of the pledge is up to the people making it.

The information that follows about the Permanency Pact comes from FosterClub. Its website is [www.fosterclub.org](http://www.fosterclub.org).

"Youth transitioning from foster care are

often unsure about who they can count on for ongoing support. Many of their significant relationships with adults have been based on professional connections, which will terminate once the formal transition from care is completed. It is critical to the youth's success to identify those adults who will continue to provide various supports through and beyond the transition from care.

"Clarifying exactly what the various supports will include can help avoid gaps in the youth's safety net and misunderstandings between the youth and the supportive adult. It not only provides structure but also a defined and verbalized commitment by both parties to a long-term, supportive relationship."

A committed, caring adult can provide a lifeline for young adults, particularly those who are beginning the transition to life on their own.

### Participants in a Permanency Pact

In addition to the two primary parties in a permanency pact – the youth and the supportive adult – it is recommended that a facilitator assist in developing the pact.

**The facilitator can be a case worker, independent living coach or another adult who is:**

- Knowledgeable in facilitating permanency pacts.
- Familiar with the youth.
- Able to provide insight into the needs of the youth transitioning from care.

Continued on page 6





**The supportive adult is one who:**

- Has been identified by the youth.
- Has a relationship with the youth.
- Is willing to commit to a life-long relationship with the youth.
- Is a positive role-model.
- Is able to provide the youth with on-going, specific help.

**Developing a Permanency Pact**

The first step in building the pact is to help the youth identify the assistance he or she wants or needs as they prepare for the transition from foster care.

FosterClub lists 45 suggested supports that can help young people move to independence more smoothly. After identifying the needed supports, the youth and facilitator develop a list of adults who might be able to provide some of them. This list may include current adults in his or her life or those with whom he or she has had a previous connection they wish to formalize or reestablish.

**The facilitator then:**

- Obtains necessary releases of information.
- Makes initial contact with the identified adult(s).
- Updates them regarding the youth's current situation.
- Gauges their level of interest.
- Assists the adult in identifying supports they will provide.
- Schedules and facilitates a permanency pact meeting with the adult and the youth.

Working with the adult, the facilitator can use the list of suggested supports to

draft a list of those the adult wishes to offer the youth. The list is then presented to the youth, who will acknowledge the offer and accept those supports he or she feels would be most beneficial. Additional supports may be suggested by either the youth or the supportive adult.

The youth and adult sign the pact, and the facilitator provides a witness signature. Copies are provided to the youth and the supportive adult, as well as maintained in the case record as part of the youth's transition plan. It is recommended that a certificate be prepared that documents their specific pact. All other members of the youth's transition team, including foster parents, the Court Appointed Special Advocate, judge and others should also receive copies.

Taking a step toward a trusting relationship is often a great accomplishment for a youth whose life is a history of broken relationships, unkept promises, and disappointment in caretakers.

The gift that a supportive adult contributes by way of a life-long commitment to the relationship is heroic. The impact of the forged relationship may be profound to everyone involved.

To symbolize the importance of the commitment, FosterClub recommends that a permanency pact agreement be marked by some sort of ceremony or celebration. The supportive adult may want to give the youth a token keepsake gift such as a piece of jewelry, photo frame, watch or similar item to mark the occasion."

"I call the Permanency Pact a 'Build-a-family.' That's what it is to me. Most foster youth that age out of care don't have a family to help them when they enter the real world. In my case, I have a family, and they would be willing to help me out in any way they can but when it comes down to it they are more of a liability to me than a support. I could go to my family for a little money here and there, or a place to stay for the holidays or a place to do laundry. My family is dysfunctional though, just the same as most foster- youth's family. If I used my family as my support system I would be unable to do anything productive with my life, or even turn back to drugs, and backtrack. I love my family very much, and remain in contact with them to this day, but when it comes down to needing a shoulder to cry on, good advice and mentoring, or support with my transition into adulthood I turn to my foster-parents, my boss, and other adult-friends. These are the people that I will create Permanency Pacts with once this is implemented. These people will be my lifelong support and I will always know who I can turn to and for what. They are my build-a-family."

— written by Cheyenne Miller, 17

**FOSTERCLUB'S WEBSITE**

[HTTP://WWW.FOSTERCLUB.COM/\\_TRANSITION/ARTICLE/PERMANENCY-PACT](http://www.fosterclub.com/_transition/article/permanency-pact) LISTS 45 THINGS ADULTS CAN DO TO HELP YOUTH TRANSITION. THESE CAN BE USED AS THE BASIS FOR A PERMANENCY PACT. YOU'RE NOT LIMITED TO THESE CHOICES WHEN CREATING A PACT WITH A YOUNG PERSON. CHECK OUT SOME OF THE CHOICES LIKE:

- |                           |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| - A HOME FOR HOLIDAYS     | - RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES | - A COMPUTER TO USE              |
| - JOB SEARCH ASSISTANCE   | - SOMEONE TO TALK TO      | - COOKING LESSONS/ASSISTANCE     |
| - HOUSE/APARTMENT HUNTING | - A PHONE TO USE          | - VOTING AND REGISTERING TO VOTE |

HOW  
TO  
HELP



## Kinship Navigators can help grandparents and relatives raising children

### **SOUTHEAST WASHINGTON**

Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Yakima, and Walla Walla Counties:

Catholic Family and Child Services

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Mary Pleger, mpleger@ccyakima.org; 509-965-7100 or 1-800-246-2962

### **CENTRAL WASHINGTON**

Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan, Grant, Lincoln, and Adams Counties: Catholic Family and Child Services

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Jennifer Santillan, jsantillan@ccyakima.org; 1-509-662-6761, Ext. 4557 or 1-800-261-1094

### **SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON**

Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Skamania, and Wahkiakum Counties: Children's Home Society, Southwest Washington region

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Tammy Bedlion, Tammyb@chs-wa.org; 360-695-1325, Ext. 4214

### **EASTERN WASHINGTON**

Ferry, Pend Oreille and Stevens Counties: Rural Resources Community Action

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Vicki Pontecorvo, vpontecorvo@ruralresources.org; 509-684-3932

Spokane County: Elder Services-Spokane Mental Health

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Angela Andreas, aandreas@smhca.org; 509-458-7450, Ext. 3007

Whitman County: Rural Resources Community Action

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Amanda Rich, arich@ruralresources.org; 509-332-0365 or 800-873-5889

### **PUGET SOUND**

King County: Catholic Community Services

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Helen Sawyer, HelenS@ccsww.org; 206-445-1360 Ext. 210

Lewis, Mason, and Thurston Counties: Family Education and Support Services

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Lynn Urvina, Lynn@FamilyESS.org; SPANISH SPEAKING NAVIGATOR ASSISTANT: Rosa Venancio, Rosa@FamilyESS.org; 360-754-7629 or 1-877-813-2828

Pierce County: HopeSparks

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Rosalyn Alber, ralber@hopesparks.org; 253-565-4484, Ext. 112

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Jesie Holden, jholden@hopesparks.org; 253-565-4484, Ext. 134

### **NORTHWEST WASHINGTON**

Whatcom County: Northwest Regional Council (AAA)

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR: Laina Berry, BerryLS@dshs.wa.gov; 360-676-6749

### **STATE CONTACT**

Hilari Hauptman, Aging and Disability Services Administration, DSHS, hilari.hauptman@dshs.wa.gov; 1-800-422-3263 or 360-725-2556

### **KINSHIP CARE IN WASHINGTON STATE WEBSITE**

[www.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare)

## Important contact information for caregivers of children in out-of-home care

Foster parents can use these resources to find support in the valuable work they do. Other resources are located on the Children's Administration foster parent web page:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

### **FOSTER PARENT AND CAREGIVER CRISIS AND SUPPORT LINE: 1-800-301-1868**

### **FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State**

FPAWS is an all volunteer, non-profit association, led by experienced caregivers who provide support and helpful services to all caregivers (foster, adoptive, and kinship) in Washington State. Contact FPAWS at [www.fpaws.org](http://www.fpaws.org) or 1-800-391-CARE (2273).

### **Fostering Well-Being Care Coordination Unit (FWB CCU)**

FWB CCU can help answer health-related questions or help you with health related issues for children/youth in your care. Contact information: 1-800-422-3263 ext. 52626 or 360-725-2626 (8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) or e-mail: [fwbccu@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:fwbccu@dshs.wa.gov). Please take care not to include any identifying information about a child unless sent through an encrypted/secure e-mail account.

### **Foster Intervention Retention and Support Team (FIRST)**

Dru Powers (*All of Region 1 North and South*)

[Dru-Powers@olivecrest.org](mailto:Dru-Powers@olivecrest.org); 509-928-6697

Deena Para (*All of Region 2 and 3*)

[Deena-Para@olivecrest.org](mailto:Deena-Para@olivecrest.org); 360-572-4271

## Fostering Together Regional Recruitment and Retention Staff

The following are the representatives of the Foster Parent Consultation Team:

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Amber Sherman ( <i>Spokane county</i> )	Amber-Sherman@olivecrest.org	509-499-2456
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### REGION 3 NORTH

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Jeanie Johns ( <i>Kitsap county</i> )	Jeanie-Johns@olivecrest.org	360-265-3398

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